Legal Services Society Service Plan

2002/2003 – 2004/2005

Legal
Services
Society

British Columbia
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Note:

- In January 2002, the provincial government announced that it will cut funding for legal aid by 38.8% in the period from 2002/2003 to 2004/2005. As of press time, it was not known how these cutbacks will affect the services and coverage provided by the Legal Services Society.
- With such a substantial funding reduction, the impact on clients will be dramatic. As well, the Society will need to overhaul its entire service delivery model in order to deliver programs and services on a significantly reduced budget.

Overview of the organization

The head office of the Legal Services Society (LSS or the Society) is in Vancouver, British Columbia. Field intake and service delivery offices — including the Society's branch offices, community law offices (CLOs), and native community law offices (NCLOs) — and area directors are located throughout the province.

A 15-member Board of Directors governs the overall operation of, and planning for, the organization. Funding comes from the provincial government, the Law Foundation, the Notary Foundation, and, indirectly, the federal government.

The Society provides legal representation and advice to eligible individuals. Services are provided by LSS staff lawyers and paralegals, or through referrals to lawyers in private practice or funded agencies.

The Society provides legal services and public legal education related to the range of legal problems identified in the "Mandate" section. These services are provided by staff in local offices, and through phone services, written materials, training for community advocates, and, increasingly, the LSS website.

The Society also has a Native Programs Department, which focuses on the development of legal education materials and training on legal issues for Aboriginal individuals and communities.

Enabling legislation/Mandate

The present Legal Services Society Act sets out a twofold legislative mandate for LSS: to provide legal representation for eligible applicants and legal education for the people of British Columbia. This mandate is currently contained in section 3 of the act, which states that:

1) The objects of the society are to ensure that:

   (a) services ordinarily provided by a lawyer are afforded to individuals who would not otherwise receive them because of financial or other reasons, and

   (b) education, advice and information about law are provided for the people of British Columbia.

2) The society must ensure, for the purposes of subsection (1)(a), that legal services are available for a qualifying individual who meets one or more of the following conditions:

(a) is a defendant in criminal proceedings that could lead to the individual's imprisonment;

(b) may be imprisoned or confined through civil proceedings;

(c) is or may be a party to a proceeding respecting a domestic dispute that affects the individual's physical or mental safety or health or that of the individual's children;

(d) has a legal problem that threatens

(i) the individual's family's physical or mental safety or health,

(ii) the individual's ability to feed, clothe and provide shelter for himself or herself and the individual's dependents, or

(iii) the individual's livelihood.

The Society's mandate, as outlined above, covers the areas of:

- criminal law: section 3(2)(a) and section 3(2)(d)(iii)
- immigration law *: section 3(2)(b)
- mental health act hearings: section 3(2)(b)
- family law: section 3(2)(c)
- poverty law **: section 3(2)(d)

* immigration law covers immigrants and refugees facing deportation

** poverty law covers a range of civil legal problems that most often affect poor people, such as foreclosures, landlord/tenant problems, and denial of Workers' Compensation benefits

In these different areas, the Society provides a continuum of services ranging from information and advice; verbal, written, and videotaped public legal education initiatives; short service (to provide legal advice); duty counsel services; and diversion to alternative services; to legal representation by paralegals or lawyers. The type of service depends on the nature of the legal problem and the characteristics of the client.

This service plan is based on the existing legislation. The Attorney General has informed the Society that the mandate may be changed in

the spring legislative session. This may result in a change in services. To the extent possible, the transition plan accompanying the Society's budget will reflect the changes to the service plan.

Section 11 of the act requires LSS to balance its revenues and expenditures for each fiscal year unless the Attorney General and the Minister of Finance and Corporate Relations approve a Society plan to incur a deficit within a given year. Because the Society's business is, by nature, demand-driven, this requirement creates a conflict that the Board of Directors must deal with in the course of its managerial duties.

Strategic context

The plan presented on the following pages is Society-wide in focus and is based on the Society's current legislative mandate. It does not report on the many important initiatives being planned and undertaken by field offices to directly improve the relevance, access to, and quality of services to clients.

All offices undertake annual planning in consultation with their communities, and report at year-end on the services delivered. Their plans include local-level goals such as —

- changing family and duty court services
- expanding services for Aboriginal people
- making the best possible use of limited resources by working with community groups to provide more and better services (for example, creating community response networks to help seniors and at-risk people avoid abusive situations)
- conducting more public legal education sessions and updating self-help materials
- continuing to work for law reform in areas such as housing and appeals related to BC Benefits, Employment Insurance, and Workers' Compensation programs
- conducting outreach to remote communities to advertise available services

These goals are reported in more detail in local office plans.

The LSS *Service Plan 2002/2003 – 2004/2005* focuses on the structures and supports in place, or needed, to —

- support the overall delivery of services;
- ensure that all services delivered are of high quality; and
- ensure that LSS is accountable to its funding bodies and stakeholders.

The Legal Services Society's mandate and performance measures broadly outline the philosophy and rationale underlying all LSS endeavours. The Society's strategic goals provide an outline for carrying out these overarching objectives in specific ways.

The service plan initiatives reported on here have been organized under the major categories of the strategic goals: mandate and service delivery, quality assurance, and fiscal resources.

Vision

Over the next three fiscal years, the Legal Services Society will be adjusting its existing service delivery model to meet the provincial government's newly defined fiscal constraints and timelines of April 1, 2002 to March 31, 2005.

The board and management will work closely with the Ministry of Attorney General and other stakeholders to develop an alternative model that both reflects the funding cutbacks and meets the needs of disadvantaged people.

An "information intensive" organization, LSS continues to explore how new Internet, Extranet, and Intranet technologies can enhance service quality and increase access to legal services for many more British Columbians. As well, the Society has been successful in developing important IT-based business tools.

Specific initiatives related to the Society's technological advances are described in the "Goals, Objectives, Key Strategies, Performance Measures, and Targets" section on page 10.

While LSS is striving to make the best possible use of new information and communications technology, the eventual success of these strategies will be partly dependent on the steps taken by other justice system participants to pilot new approaches to access to justice. Such initiatives include simplifying judicial and quasi-judicial processes to make the legal system more accessible to clients. In particular, the Society will continue to partner with the Ministry of Attorney General to pilot new family law processes where resources permit.

Mission

The Legal Services Society is an independent, non-profit organization, created by statute to —

- provide effective legal services to BC residents living in poverty, particularly those people experiencing legal problems that threaten their liberty, security, and livelihood; and
- provide public legal education.

Since the state is often the opposing party in legal matters that affect people living in poverty, LSS can only truly serve its clients' interests by remaining independent of all levels of government and special interest groups.

The Society's mission is to —

- Ensure that legal representation is provided to those people facing serious legal problems who would not otherwise receive legal help.
- Ensure that education, advice, and information about the law are provided for all people in British Columbia.
- Ensure that our services are —
  - appropriately,
  - capably, and
  - respectfully delivered.
- Work with the government, the community, and the private bar to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of all legal services.
- Deliver legal services to the Aboriginal people of BC that meet their particular needs.

Values

LSS recognizes that it achieves its mission through the skilled work of the private bar, its own staff and board, and the boards and staff of funded agencies.

The Society also recognizes the importance of working in partnership with other organizations involved in the delivery of legal services and public legal education.

Because our clients' interests are paramount and their cultural and social backgrounds diverse, the Society recognizes that it must tailor its services to remove barriers to obtaining legal aid and information.

Planning context and key strategic issues

In the planning period from 2002/2003 to 2004/2005, the Society will be following the provincial government's financial restructuring initiatives. This will mean a significant shift in the manner in which legal aid and legal information services are provided to British Columbians.

Fiscal challenges

In January 2002, the provincial government announced cuts to legal aid funding for the period from 2002/2003 to 2004/2005. In addition, the government outlined plans to have the Society absorb significant new costs related to downsizing, inflationary pressures, *Rowbotham* applications (for people who make a request for a court-appointed lawyer after being denied legal aid), and large cases (exceeding $50,000).

The major challenge for the Society will be to implement a new service plan to reflect the announced budget cuts. In preparation for this, the Society conducted a confidential review of legal aid as part of the government's 2001 core services review. In this review, the Society assumed funding cuts of approximately 20%. The recent announcement by the Attorney General detailing more substantial cuts will require the Society to modify some of the proposals suggested in the core services review exercise.

The Society has been fortunate in receiving significant grants from the Law Foundation to address issues of service quality and to develop and pilot new approaches to service delivery. These projects are identified in the "Goals, Objectives, Key Strategies, Performance Measures, and Targets" section on page 10.

The Budget Transparency and Accountability Act (BTAA) has created additional administrative work and new pressures. Under the requirements of the act, the Society has had to alter its current procedures and practices to provide more financial and performance information much earlier in the fiscal year.

Family services

Two external reports are available that describe the inadequacy of LSS services for family clients: *Where the Axe Falls: The Real Cost of Government Cutbacks to Legal Aid* (conducted for the Law Society of BC), and *Access to Justice Denied* (released by the Women's Access to Legal Services Coalition).

When LSS implemented cuts to both financial eligibility and family coverage policies in the mid-nineties, it was anticipated that government services (family justice counsellors in particular) would provide alternative services for those clients no longer eligible for legal aid. As a result of these cuts, LSS referrals to lawyers for family matters dropped from 21,176 in 1994/95 to 13,828 in 1999/2000.

While family justice centres did experience an increase in family applications, LSS offices throughout the province were inundated with requests for service from individuals wanting help to deal with separation, child custody and access, and child maintenance. Because family justice counsellors serve primarily within the provincial family court, applicants seeking services for Supreme Court matters continued to rely on LSS services.

The Society re-introduced additional Supreme Court family coverage and raised the financial eligibility guidelines in the 2000 – 2001 fiscal year to qualify more applicants for family services. The result was a surge in applications for family services that was far beyond what the Society anticipated based on the eligibility and coverage changes.

This increase suggests that there is a significant number of people in the community whose needs are not being met by either LSS or provincial services. These people were encouraged to apply to LSS upon hearing that the coverage guidelines had eased up.

The Society continues to work with the ministry to develop and co-ordinate programs that focus on information and dispute resolution, while ensuring clients with high conflict cases or protection issues are afforded adequate legal representation.

Under the new system, clients who are unable to benefit from alternative services will need to rely on self-help materials. The challenge for the future, however, is to find effective ways of providing some level of service to the many British Columbians whose needs are not being met by either LSS or provincial government services.

A growing challenge

In the coming year, the Society will need to address a growing problem facing not only LSS, but legal aid plans across Canada: the increasing scarcity of private bar lawyers willing to take on legal aid clients.

The number of lawyers in BC willing to accept legal aid referrals dropped from 1,943 in 1995 to 1,498 in 2000. While this trend is particularly problematic in the area of family law, a similar pattern is emerging among criminal lawyers.

The increasing complexity of court processes and the difficulties posed by clients in crisis, coupled with the holdbacks imposed on tariff payments, make it simply uneconomical for private lawyers to provide legal aid services.

LSS is aware that it is increasingly asking lawyers to subsidize legal aid work from their own practices and pockets. These findings do not bode well for the future. Costs increase when local lawyers are not available and counsel must be brought in from other areas of the province.

Discussion with government and other key stakeholders is urgently required to address this trend before it turns into a full-scale crisis. The Society calls on the provincial and federal governments to address this growing problem facing legal aid plans across Canada before the system ceases to function entirely.

Goals, objectives, key strategies, performance measures, and targets

Strategic goals

Over the next three years, LSS will continue to pursue strategic goals in three areas, as follows:

Part A: Mandate and service delivery

- Provide appropriate levels of service in each area of law, as mandated by the Legal Services Society Act.
- Provide public legal education to help more people understand and benefit from the law.
- Provide the best possible mix of service delivery models by continuously monitoring services and implementing any adjustments needed to meet changing requirements or take advantage of new opportunities.
- Work with Aboriginal people and their communities to develop and promote innovative and effective methods to deliver legal services and legal education.
- Work together with poor and otherwise disadvantaged communities throughout BC to develop innovative and effective methods to deliver legal services and information, and to remove barriers to obtaining legal services and information.

Part B: Quality assurance

- Improve the Society's quality assurance systems so that all service delivery and systems comply with Society policies, meet professional standards, and are effective in meeting clients' legal needs.

Part C: Fiscal resources

- Secure sufficient funding to meet the demand-driven nature of the Society's services.

Specific initiatives corresponding to these goals are described in detail on the following pages.

Part A: Mandate and service delivery

Goal 1	Provide appropriate levels of service in each area of law, as mandated by the Legal Services Society Act.

A1.1 February 2002 transition plan
(new item)

The Society has been advised that the provincial government will —

- reduce funding for legal aid by 38.8% over the next three years as follows:
  - fiscal year 2002/2003: to $71.435 million
  - fiscal year 2003/2004: to $62.465 million
  - fiscal year 2004/2005: to $53.873 million
- require the Society to absorb significant new costs related to downsizing, inflationary pressures, *Rowbotham* applications (for people who make a request for a court-appointed lawyer after being denied legal aid), and large cases (exceeding $50,000).
- introduce amendments to the Legal Services Society Act that will dramatically affect the coverage the Society provides.

The Society is expected to provide legal aid for cases where representation is required by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms or the courts. This will include —

- adult criminal matters,
- Young Offenders Act matters,
- mental health reviews,
- Child, Family and Community Service Act matters,
- immigration and refugee matters (the ministry plans to work with the federal government to clarify responsibility for funding these cases),
- limited services to family law clients requiring restraining orders, and

- poverty law assistance to a maximum of $1 – 2 million (provided through public legal education and information services).

The ministry has also suggested that the Society should continue to provide —

- Brydges line services,
- out-of-custody duty counsel services, and
- coverage for the arraignment court process.

As the Society can no longer meet its legislative mandate under these new coverage guidelines, the ministry may introduce amendments to the Legal Services Society Act in the spring session of the legislature.

Key strategies

The Society will provide the ministry with a transition plan by mid-February, illustrating how it will accommodate the budget cuts. Changes will be required in all parts of the organization to meet these service reductions.

This transition plan will —

- meet the Society's new mandate,
- respond to government cutbacks, and
- produce the least harm possible to clients and staff.

Measurable outcomes

- Society follows new legislative mandate
- Society realigns funding according to budget cutbacks
- Old processes and systems shut down in a timely manner and within budget guidelines
- New systems and processes designed and implemented efficiently to serve clients

Goal 2	Provide public legal education to help more people understand and benefit from the law.

A2.1 Legal information for non-English speakers
(formerly A2.2 in the *Business Plan* 2001/2002)

The Society's Public Legal Education (PLE) Program provides basic legal information in languages other than English. This is a four-year project to ensure that basic "rights" information about seniors' benefits, family law, BC Benefits, and immigration is accessible to more people in their native language.

This project depends on the amount of funding available for PLE services in the period from 2002/2003 to 2004/2005.

Key strategies

- Produce an ESL publication in one area of law
- Adapt and translate this ESL publication into seven languages
- Distribute 10,000 copies of each translation within the relevant cultural communities

Measurable outcomes

- Reach potential readers who are unable to use existing English language information

Goal 3	Provide the best possible mix of service delivery models by continuously monitoring services and implementing any adjustments needed to meet changing requirements or take advantage of new opportunities.

A3.1 Family law services on the Internet

Funded by the Law Foundation, this multi-faceted initiative will look at how the Internet can best be used to support a range of family law services, from legal

information and referral to structured assistance and advice. The project will include —

- a public website offering information, self-help materials, and training documents, as well as links to other appropriate sites;
- closed e-mail discussion lists for community advocates and offices providing limited assistance to clients through lay advocacy;
- self-help clinics; and
- limited referral services.

This initiative will require three to four years to carry out fully. LSS anticipates that its family law services on the Internet will serve hundreds of additional family clients who would not be eligible for current services.

Key strategies

- Maintain protocols regarding content and links with other key agencies (such as the Family Maintenance Enforcement Program [FMEP], Dispute Resolution, Family Justice, Attorney General, and the pro bono site of the Law Society/Canadian Bar Association)
- Plan, build, and test website
- Plan a limited assistance project in light of new service plan
- Create closed discussion groups for advocates

Measurable outcomes

Year one

- Evaluation process identified
- Community advocates identified

Long term

- Increased public use of the website to access family law information and services

- Increased communication among advocates
- Expanded services to clients

Goal 4	Work with Aboriginal people and their communities to develop and promote innovative and effective methods to deliver legal services and legal education.

A4.1 Aboriginal child welfare

LSS will pilot early intervention approaches to reduce the rate of child apprehension in Aboriginal communities and/or shorten the length of time that apprehended children stay in care. Funded through the Law Foundation, this initiative will be carried out using a combination of public legal education materials and community development/training strategies. The pilot program may require two years to complete.

Key strategies

Year one

- Complete a finalized project plan
- Select test sites
- Produce materials and modules
- Implement program at first test site

Measurable outcomes

- Reduction in the rate of child-parent separation on reserves
- Reduction in the number of Aboriginal children apprehended by the Ministry of Children and Family Development
- Increase in the number of apprehended children placed with other families on reserve

- Increased use of supervision orders over apprehensions
- Shorter stays in care for apprehended children

A4.2 Poverty law services on reserves
(formerly A4.3 in the *Business Plan* 2001/2002)

This initiative is concerned with providing effective services to individuals on reserve who are experiencing poverty law problems as a result of actions taken by band councils. Some of the consequences of such decisions may be loss of housing on reserve, loss of employment, denial of income assistance, or prohibited access to community services, including water or sewage services.

Over the past two years, LSS has supported this initiative by providing a small budget to help fund representation services for Aboriginal people who are in a dispute with their band council.

The Society is now considering using some of this money to provide a continuum of services, beginning with public legal education and mediation, and extending to arbitration where applicable. The objective of this initiative is to pilot such a program.

Key strategies

- Use the designated budget to represent individuals experiencing poverty law problems as a result of actions taken by their band council
- Use a portion of the funds to advance cases dealing with the authority of councils over the distribution of housing
- Develop a written proposal and costing for a new program that will encompass a range of services, beginning with public legal education and ending with representation

Measurable outcomes

- Protection of the rights of individual Aboriginal people living on reserve to basic life necessities

Goal 5	Work together with poor and otherwise disadvantaged communities throughout BC to develop innovative and effective methods to deliver legal services and information, and to remove barriers to obtaining legal services and information.

A5.1 Expand Law Line to remote communities

Initiated in 2000 – 2001, this is a plan to extend Law Line service from its current Lower Mainland user area to remote and under-served communities in BC.

Initial planning indicates a strong interest at the community level; however, staff need training in Aboriginal legal information, and local referral resources have to be identified. The intent is to keep extending this service to additional communities and to monitor the need province-wide.

This program may be altered to provide limited information services to people in communities where offices have been closed due to budget cutbacks.

Key strategies

- Extend Law Line services to two additional regions
- Hold six information and training sessions in the two regions
- Distribute 500 – 1,000 brochures in each of the regions
- Train all Law Line staff in Aboriginal legal education

Measurable outcomes

- Increased Law Line calls from targeted areas
- Local community workers know about and refer people to Law Line

A5.2 Develop PovNet as a significant poverty law resource

The purpose of the project is to strengthen the anti-poverty advocacy network by providing —

- a public website with current legal information about various poverty law subjects and links to anti-poverty issues, organizations, and resources; and
- closed e-mail discussion lists where advocates can share information and advice.

LSS contributes to the project by participating on the discussion lists and the steering committee, and by providing financial and administrative support. This year's goal is to maintain support to community advocates using the closed e-mail lists to share information and advice, and to increase the website training resources in the area of housing and Canada Pension Plan benefits.

Key strategies

- Maintain activity on current lists
- Double the content of the housing database
- Post two guides on the public lists outlining changes to legislation affecting poor people

Measurable outcomes

- Timely responses on the closed e-mail lists, indicating that advocates have better access to current information and advice
- Increased number of visits to the public website
- Increased feedback from website readers

Part B: Quality assurance

Goal 1	Improve the Society's quality assurance systems so that all service delivery and systems comply with Society policies, meet professional standards, and are effective in meeting clients' legal needs.

B1.1 Aboriginal awareness training
(formerly "B1.4 Cross-cultural and Aboriginal awareness training" in the *Business Plan* 2001/2002)

This project may be delayed or adapted in the new transition plan. It was initially funded by the Law Foundation for 2000 – 2001 but was postponed so that a comprehensive staff training plan could be developed first. The initiative will have an impact on individual staff members, the workplace, and services to clients.

The objectives of the project are to —

- improve quality of services to legal aid clients,
- improve relationships among colleagues through a better understanding of different values and perspectives,
- improve quality of the workplace for all LSS, CLO, and NCLO staff,
- reduce turnover, and
- improve opportunities for the development of individual potential.

Key strategies

- Deliver three- to six- hour training sessions in Aboriginal awareness to all field staff; this training will be delivered regionally with local offices, and will be made available to selected members of the local bar and community groups

Measurable outcomes

All staff will:

- Understand the importance of diversity
- Understand the legal, cultural, and social history of Aboriginal peoples in BC
- Understand the harm in discrimination and stereotyping
- Consider and apply cultural diversity concepts when developing systems, programs, and initiatives in order to avoid systemic discrimination barriers
- Benefit from the increased productivity, creativity, and innovation of their colleagues

B1.2 Quality assurance for the tariff
(formerly B1.7 in the *Business Plan* 2001/2002)

Funded by the Law Foundation, this is a three-year project involving LSS and the private bar. LSS will develop and pilot a number of initiatives to ensure the quality of legal aid services. These may include —

- a mentoring program,
- initiatives to enhance the circulation of information critical to quality of service for legal aid clients,
- development and recognition of best practices,
- encouragement of cross-cultural competence, and
- quality control mechanisms for identifying inadequate service.

Key strategies

- Develop a range of quality assurance incentives and quality control mechanisms for the private bar

Measurable outcomes

- Evaluation processes in place for each initiative to determine its effectiveness in enhancing the quality of service to clients (this could act as a cost-benefit

analysis of each initiative to determine its relative merit in this regard)

B1.3 Human Resources Information System (HRIS)

(formerly B1.10 in the *Business Plan* 2001/2002)

There is an urgent need to implement a comprehensive HR/Payroll solution that will provide a more reliable approach to processing large volumes of payroll data and increase organizational effectiveness through access to employee data.

The current HRIS/Payroll system is DOS-based and is largely incompatible with the LSS technical environment. This system has failed on a regular basis, to the point where payroll has been threatened.

The HR Department has limited access to the data contained within the existing system and experiences difficulty extracting accurate reports. In order to reduce reporting difficulties, staff are required to manually enter data.

This project began in 2001/2002 and will be implemented through 2002/2003.

Key strategies

- Implement a web-based, Society-wide HRIS/payroll system by April 1, 2002 that will allow LSS to use accurate and relevant employee data to respond to user requests for information in a timely manner

Measurable outcomes

- Ability to access reliable workforce data and generate reports to provide LSS staff with key information for making strategic decisions

B1.4 Executive/management reporting capability
(formerly B1.5 in the *Business Plan* 2001 2002)

This project involves developing new software to ensure that all of the relevant information in the Case Management System is accessible in regular reports. This information is needed to monitor caseloads and case outcomes, as well as to generate useful client summary data. The project was largely completed in 2000 – 2001 but needs several months more work to develop the reports fully.

Key strategies

- Develop and maintain centralized Web-based collection of information that includes relevant statistical information and user-friendly reporting tools

Measurable outcomes

- Ability to report on primary effectiveness measures, enabling the organization to manage its business better
- Executive information available for risk management and more timely decision-making

B1.5 Tariff processing enhancements
(formerly B1.8 in the *Business Plan* 2001/2002)

This objective is multi-faceted and includes —

- implementation of a fast-track billing system
- development of electronic billing forms; and
- exploration of electronic billing.

Tariff processing changes have been identified that will improve the billing system for legal aid services provided by private bar lawyers. A series of Law Foundation-sponsored initiatives will result in less complicated support and billing systems for private bar lawyers over a three-year period. Reduced system

complexity should attract new lawyers and encourage a number of seasoned lawyers to once again provide legal services to the poor people of BC.

Key strategies

Implement:

- Electronic billing
- Electronic funds transfer
- Web-based online tariff guide summaries and forms
- Electronic authorizations

Measurable outcomes

- Better support through less complicated processes
- Increased productivity through reduced administrative overhead
- Less time spent by lawyers on administrative overhead (for instance, understanding processes and filling out forms)
- Increased number of private bar lawyers willing to provide legal aid services

Part C: Fiscal resources

Goal 1	Secure sufficient funding to meet the demand-driven nature of the Society's services.

C1.1 Legal fee recovery through property liens

The objective of this program is to recover legal fees from those clients who have significant equity in their family assets that is not accessible when they apply for legal aid, but which becomes available at a later date. The money recovered will enable the Society to cover more family cases. Once the liens legislation amendment is introduced by government, four to six months will be needed to put the program in place.

Key strategies

- Develop the submission and draft legislation for government through a collaborative undertaking with the ministry
- Develop a full costing and implementation plan as revenue from this program is linked to the number of family law clients receiving full services
- Implement the new program immediately (upon introduction and proclamation of legislation)

Measurable outcomes

- Services extended to additional clients through a fair program of cost recovery

Overall performance measures

1. Provide application and referral numbers for the past three years in each area of law, along with an explanation of changes over the past year.

2. Identify trends in the proportion of unrepresented litigants at court.

   This measure will describe the percentage of individuals who are representing themselves in court (usually involuntarily) and is directly related to the performance of the Society. LSS will need to obtain actual numbers through the Court Services branch of the Ministry of Attorney General; however, these may not be immediately available as centrally compiled statistics are now under development.

   The federal Department of Justice and the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics (CCJS) also consider this measure to be extremely relevant for assessing potential unmet need for legal aid services. The Society's objective will be to establish a benchmark figure to assess various aspects of future performance.

3. Assess the nature and degree of individual requests for legal information through an analysis of:

   - the number of calls to Law Line from remote areas,
   - the number of publications distributed, and
   - the number of visits to the Electronic Law Library (ELL) and LSS websites.

   The number of visits to the two websites will be counted to create a baseline figure. In the years to come, LSS expects to be able to record the number of visits to specific webpages within each site.

   Figures for the number of calls to Law Line and the number of publications distributed are available for previous years.

4. Report at year-end on the number of public legal education presentations made in local communities by the staff of LSS field offices.

   This measure will be made possible by introducing a time-keeping system for poverty law staff.

Summary financial outlook

The Society will provide the ministry with a new budget and transition plan in February. It will be difficult to forecast costs given —

- new coverage and funding obligations,
- the timing of the legislation that will change the Society's mandate,
- the substantial reorganization that these changes will require,
- the unpredictability of financial stability given the dramatic changes the Society will have to undertake during the transition period, and
- the impact on clients.

The Society will work closely with the ministry through this period of transition.